

Public Health Consultation in Child Care



A project of Healthy Child Care Washington

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Funded by:

Healthy Child Care Washington

Washington State Department of Health, Community and Family Health

The Baby Toddler Initiative, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Office of Child Care Policy

Layout and design by:

Comprehensive Health Education Foundation (C.H.E.F.®)

22419 Pacific Highway South, Seattle, WA 98198-5104

Telephone: 800-323-2433 Fax: 206-824-3072

Web site: www.chef.org

Printed and distributed by:

Washington State Department of Health, Community and Family Health. Publications Number 950-137

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September 2000

Acknowledgments

Providing health consultation to child care providers who care for infants and toddlers is a relatively new field for Public Health Departments and nurses who are in private practice. This handbook was written because many people have expressed a need for information specific to infant and toddler care. We are indebted to many nurses, nutritionists, environmental health specialists, health educators, child care providers, and others for their contributions to this effort. We would especially like to acknowledge the following people representing many local health jurisdictions in Washington State and other agencies as well.

Benton-Franklin Health Department
Chelan-Douglas Health Department
Public Health – Seattle and King County

Elaine Ruhlman
Heidi Collins
Gail Sarto
Ellen Jeffcott
Lenore Rubin
Carson Furry
Peggy King
Nancy Wessenberg
Nancy Couhig
Robin Kenepah
Janice Boase
Partners in Child Care
Debbie Renaud-Chudak
Debbie Lee
Lowest Jefferson
George Weed
Beth Hines
Lorrie Grevstad

Snohomish Health District
Whatcom County Health Department
Washington State Department of Health

Washington State Department of Social and
Health Services
Interlake Childcare Center
Our Kid's Press
University of Washington, Dept. of Nursing

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Elaine Ruhlman - Pasco, Washington
Betty Shuler - Sisters, Oregon
Cathy Sullivan - Anchorage, Alaska
Micha Trusty - Everett, Washington
Kyle Yasuda, M.D. - Seattle, Washington

Foreword

The care of young children in the United States has dramatically shifted to non-parent care during the working hours of the parents. We have an obligation for insuring that the care children receive will maximize their growth and development. In fact, we have a chance to make things better for children whose own parents are not able to provide the support, love, and investment children need. *Healthy Child Care Washington* is making a positive contribution to the well-being of children in child care in the state of Washington. This manual is a great resource for nursing consultants in child care.

I have always been partial to a definition of nursing as “professional mothering,” although I recognize my liking of that metaphor is not universally held! I am a great fan of mothering and have written a whole chapter on the topic in the *Handbook of Parenting*, Vol. 3 (1994), eds. M. Borenstein, Erlbaum Publishers. I envision the role of child care nursing consultants as “mothering” the child care providers.

Caring for young children is demanding, requires emotional availability and sensitivity while, at the same time, society does not give financial remuneration in keeping with the importance and demands of the role. A major role of mothers, and I infer of nursing child care consultants, is to monitor. Monitoring will be a major part of your role as nursing consultant. Many sections of this manual, in fact, give you excellent tips for monitoring the physical environment, the children’s development, the provision of developmentally appropriate activities, and the cleanliness and safety of the setting.

Caregivers need refueling. You will do this with child care providers, refueling their positive mood and/or redirecting their negative interpretations and providing new information that helps them to give better care with the assurance they are making a difference.

In my opinion, child care consultation is the place to be at this time in our society. You have an enormous opportunity to shape the way child care is given by your direct alignment with child care providers, with your advocacy for child care resources, and by your role modeling of work with the family and other community helpers and resources. Please hold in your memory my cheerleading. Right on! Go for it! Yes, that is a creative idea! You are making a difference in the lives of children in our great country. The first three years do last a lifetime and you are out there brokering for children and families!

I encourage you to investigate the resources listed in this manual—the books, videos, web sites, and national organizations are there to help you. Reach out and you will find many resources for your consultees.

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Introduction

Welcome to the stimulating, challenging, and rewarding world of child care health consultation! You play a vital role in promoting health for children, their families, and their caregivers. As this manual describes, your expertise is particularly important to those working with infants, toddlers and their families.

Several developments in Washington State led to the need for this manual. Since the early 1980's Washington State Child Care Licensing has required that child care centers serving four or more infants under the age of one year have consultation services from nurses. In addition, through funding for increasing quality in child care serving infants and toddlers, each local health jurisdiction in Washington received funding to provide health consultation to child care sites in its community.

Beginning in the mid-1990's numerous collaborative efforts focused attention on the interrelationship between the fields of early childhood care, education, and health, particularly public health and maternal-child health. Two of these efforts, Healthy Child Care Washington and the Baby-Toddler Initiative, have been instrumental in developing a statewide system of child care health consultation through community partnerships in which public health jurisdictions (i.e., local health departments or districts) provide health consultation to child care providers in the community.

This manual addresses issues for child care homes and centers that care for infants and toddlers. It is not meant to replace any of the excellent resources available related to infants and toddlers, but instead gives an overview of issues that are in the scope of practice of health consultants working with child care sites in their communities. The manual provides new ways of incorporating information and material into practice for those who are just beginning this important work and provides “ticklers” for those experienced child care consultants among the readers. The resources and references section at the end of the manual provide a listing of a wide range of resources for the health consultant and the child care provider.

How this manual is organized

We have organized this manual in a manner that does not interrupt the readers as they read through it for the first time. We have attempted to make it an easy reference tool for future use. Thus, “Tips for Caregivers” and “Tips for Health Consultants” are integrated throughout the text and identified by a unique icon. Examples of methods for integrating the information into practice are located at the end of each chapter and are not meant to be limiting, but to stimulate other consultation activities. Sample forms are located in the Appendices and an extensive Resource and Reference Guide is organized by chapter and topic at the back of the manual. There are side bar margins on each page for making notes or adding other suggestions. As you find other materials and tools related to this topic, it is our hope that you will put them in this manual to provide a traveling resource guide for you, the health consultant.

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